

The Constitution

conference which took place last September. Today in matters of education New Brunswick has almost achieved a parallel system for French and English-speaking students.

My province is not divided. My province has, of course, a few marginal extremists on both sides, but its citizens are working and living together with a large measure of respect and co-operation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, another significant aspect which is guaranteed in the proposed constitution is the concept of sharing the great wealth of this country. Indeed, section 31(1)(a) reads, and I quote:

(a) promoting equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians;

This principle of equal opportunities in sharing among the regions of the same country has also dominated political life in my province since 1960. Indeed, we owe the expression "equal opportunities" to the man who was the premier of that province at the time, Louis Robichaud, as he is the one who put in place a program which said—

[*English*]

Louis Robichaud's equal opportunity program said that whether you are English in Queens or Charlotte counties or French in Restigouche or Gloucester, you had equal access to the meagre wealth of the province. In fact, New Brunswick from that moment on has not ceased progressing, and we need only look at the results of its school system, which finally was opened to all the citizens, not just to those who lived in the privileged cities, to see the progress that co-operation achieved. The fact is that the progressive people in New Brunswick were ready to unite and to reform, and that program has not been destroyed by successive governments. There was hope for everyone. There was hope because it did not matter what language you spoke, what religion you practised or where you lived; the citizens would share in the opportunities of that province. This reform was possible in good part because of federal government programs of unconditional transfers to the poorer provinces which provided citizens with a reasonable level of essential public services and which in fact reduced regional disparities.

The very principle of sharing has become part of our way of life and now, after more than 20 years of practice, the principle of equalization is to be entrenched in the constitution.

The proposal to entrench the equalization principle is not foreign to our history as a nation. Does anyone think that the maritimes joined confederation to get help from other partners? The fact is that then New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were "have" provinces, and not only do the old sketches of Cunard lines leaving the Miramichi and Pointe du Chêne for the high seas reveal the intense commercial activities of mid-nineteenth century on the New Brunswick coast, but they also sometimes rekindle the idea of an economically viable province.

Basic to the Canadian experience is that when one province has flourished with the development of a resource, the other

partners benefit, and not to have another's resource does not make one less Canadian.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, since last Monday, we have heard several members of the opposition say they endorse such and such a part of the resolution. It seems in fact—and I am thinking of the speech the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) just made—that sometimes our divisions are less in the substance than in the method. I have in mind the words of the poet de Saint-Exupéry who once said about a controversy, and I am paraphrasing: We are divided over the means which are the result of our reasoning, but not over the goals which are always the same. I have a feeling that those words apply to our debates.

● (2120)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is an important week in our Parliament. History is being made by all of us, ordinary human beings, yet history is supposed to be made only by giants. When the flag debate took place, ordinary men struggled with an extraordinary problem. There was division and possibly there was rancour.

I remember that as a journalist based in London, my colleagues and I followed the acrimonious debate in the Parliament of Canada with some pretty heavy discussions of our own. Yet, on February 15, 1965, when the new Canadian flag was raised at Canada House on Trafalgar Square, our discussions were forgotten and we were all proud to be Canadians and to be present.

It is my hope that when this resolution is adopted and when our constitution comes home, we will be no less proud.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin by asking a question which I know many Canadians are asking, and that is: what are we doing here and why are we spending what some people out there think is an inordinate amount of time discussing what some people think is far removed from their daily lives, that is the constitution? I know that this is what a number of people are saying, and it is evident in the mail we all get and in the phone calls we all receive.

Last week I had the opportunity to spend two full days in Vancouver at a meeting of regional council No. 1 of the IWA which was and remains my union. Many of the people at that conference from all over western Canada were asking that question. That is not to say they did not recognize we have to deal with the constitution, but they are impatient because they want Parliament and their elected representatives to get on with the job and deal with it thoroughly but with some dispatch. They want Parliament to bring the constitution home and to begin the job of laying the groundwork for a new